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TO AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI PRIORITY

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E.O . 11652: XGDS-1,2,

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SUBJECT: MIDDLE EAST SITUATION - BRIEFING MATERIAL FOR

AMBASSADOR

REF: NEW DELHI 13981

1. FOLLOWING ARE MAJOR JUDGMENTS OF SOON TO BE PUBLISHED

SPECIAL NATIONAL INTELLIGENCE ESTIMATE ON MIDDLE
EAST SITUATION, ON WHICH AMBASSADOR MAY WANT TO DRAW
FOR LABOR ATTACHE CONFERENCE. CONTROLLED DISSEMINATION.

2. FACTORS IN ARAB-ISRAELI SITUATION: THE CEASEFIRE
AGREEMENT BETWEEN EGYPT AND ISRAEL HAS TAKEN SOME OF THE
HEAT FROM THE MIDDLE EAST CONFRONTATION. THE PARTIES
HAVE ACCEPTED THE PRINCIPLE OF PEACE TALKS WHICH AT
LEAST HOLD OUT THE PROSPECT OF BASIC CHANGE IN THE
CONFLICT. HIGHLY CONTENTIOUS ISSUES REMAIN UNRESOLVED:
PRINCIPALLY THE DISENGAGEMENT OF FORCES AND SOME IMPORTANT
MODALITIES OF THE PEACE CONFERENCE -- INCLUDING REPRE-
SENTATION ISSUES. WHILE THE PARTIES RECOGNIZE THE NEED
TO BEGIN THE PEACE CONFERENCE WITHOUT DELAY, THE
NEGOTIATIONS WILL BE LONG AND DIFFICULT AND AN EARLY
BREAKTHROUGH CANNOT BE EXPECTED.

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EGYPT KNOWS WHAT IT WANTS FROM NEGOTIATIONS, AND IT WANTS IT RELATIVELY QUICKLY. PRESIDENT SADAT BEGAN THE WAR TO GALVANIZE THE GREAT POWERS TO IMPOSE A SOLUTION

ON ISRAEL. WHILE HE WILL BARGAIN OVER SUCH MATTERS AS THE PHASES OF DISENGAGEMENT AND THE EXTENT OF DEMILITARIZED ZONES IN THE SINAI, SADAT IS DETERMINED TO RESTORE EGYPTIAN SOVEREIGNTY OVER THE PENINSULA. HE FEELS HE MUST MAKE RAPID PROGRESS TOWARD A START OF ISRAELI WITHDRAWAL TO HEAD OFF CRITICISM.

IN DEALING WITH ISRAEL, DAMASCUS WILL PROBABLY FOLLOW THE EGYPTIAN LEAD, LAGGING A FEW STEPS BEHIND, AND TAKING A HARDER BARGAINING POSITION. YET IF THE SYRIANS ARE NOT SATISFIED, THEY MAY RENEW HOSTILITIES.

SERIOUS PEACE TALKS RAISE EXTREMELY DIVISIVE QUESTIONS WITHIN ISRAEL. TERRITORIAL ISSUES HAVE ALWAYS PROVED EXTRAORDINARY TOUCHY MATTERS FOR THE ISRAELI BODY POLITIC, AND PUBLIC OPINION WILL FIND IT ESPECIALLY HARD TO CONSIDER GIVING UP THE SECURITY THAT THE SINAI, GOLAN HEIGHTS, AND WEST BANK BUFFER ZONES PROVIDED. MOREOVER, IN THE CONTEXT OF THE CAMPAIGN FOR ELECTIONS ON 31 DECEMBER 1973 MRS. MEIR'S GOVERNMENT FEELS PARTICULARLY VULNERABLE TO ITS POLITICAL CRITICS.

SUBSTANTIVE PROGRESS IN NEGOTIATIONS IS THUS NOT LIKELY AT LEAST UNTIL FORMATION OF A NEW GOVERNMENT WITH A NEW MANDATE FOLLOWING THE ELECTIONS. SHOULD MRS. MEIR'S COALITION LOSE ITS MAJORITY IN THE KNESSET, ISRAEL'S TERMS FOR A PEACE SETTLEMENT WOULD HARDEN.

BOTH THE ARABS AND ISRAEL LOOK TO THE US AS THE KEY ELEMENT IN PEACE NEGOTIATIONS.

-- THE ARABS BELIEVE THE US CAN FORCE A TOTAL ISRAELI WITHDRAWAL, AND THEY WILL GROW INCREASINGLY IMPATIENT WITH WASHINGTON, AND WITH THE NEGOTIATING PROCESS, IF MOVEMENT TOWARD THIS GOAL IS NOT SOON FORTHCOMING.

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-- ISRAEL STILL LOOKS TO THE US TO PROTECT ITS INTERESTS AND TO SERVE AS A COUNTERWEIGHT TO THE USSR. BUT ISRAELI LEADERS CANNOT ESCAPE DOUBTS ABOUT THE RELIABILITY OF WASHINGTON IN LIGHT OF THE OIL EMBARGO, THE STRAINS IN THE EUROPEAN ALLIANCE, AND THE US-SOVIET DETENTE. HENCE, TEL AVIV IS INCLINED TO MOVE AS SLOWLY AS IT CAN IN THE PEACE PROCESS WITHOUT ALIENATING WASHINGTON.

SOVIET ACTIONS REFLECT THE DEPTH OF MOSCOW'S COMMITMENT TO PRESERVING AND, IF POSSIBLE, EXTENDING ITS INFLUENCE IN THE AREA.(THE AIR FORCE ATTACHED A FOOTNOTE OF DISSENT TO THIS PORTION OF THE ESTIMATE.)

THE SOVIETS ARE DETERMINED TO INSIST ON BEING ACCORDED A ROLE AS ARBITER OF DEVELOPMENTS IN THE MIDDLE EAST. WHILE MUCH OF THEIR ACTIVITY WILL BE DIRECTED TO DEMONSTRATING SUPPORT TO THEIR ARAB CLIENTS, THEIR OWN PARTICULAR GOAL WILL BE TO GET A SETTLEMENT WHICH GAINS FORMAL US ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF THEIR ROLE IN THE AREA.

IF HOSTILITIES RESUME, MOSCOW WOULD SUPPORT THE ARABS. SHOULD THE ARABS FACE MILITARY DISASTER, THE CHANCES ARE THAT THE SOVIETS WOULD INTERVENE IN SOME FASHION.

THE LINKING OF SAUDI OIL TO EGYPTIAN MILITARY MIGHT HAS BEEN ONE OF THE STRIKING NEW ELEMENTS IN THE CURRENT PHASE OF THE ARAB-ISRAELI DISPUTE. WHILE THERE MAY BE SOME FLEXIBILITY IN USING OIL AS A WEAPON, THE ARABS WILL DEMAND PROGRESS INCLUDING SUBSTANTIAL ISRAELI WITHDRAWALS FROM OCCUPIED TERRITORY BEFORE ENDING THE SQUEEZE ON OIL SUPPLIES. KING FAYSAL WILL CONCERT HIS ACTIONS CLOSELY WITH THOSE OF HIS ARAB PARTNERS, ESPECIALLY EGYPT. BESIDE SUPPORTING SADAT, FAYSAL'S RELIGIOUS CONVICTIONS IMPEL HIM TO INSIST ON SOME FORM OF ARAB CONTROL OVER THE OLD CITY OF JERUSALEM.

THE PALESTINIANS ALSO CANNOT BE LEFT OUT OF THE PEACE PROCESS. WHILE SADAT AND THE LEADERS OF OTHER ARAB STATES ARE NOT MUCH SWAYED BY PALESTINIAN DESIRES, THE FEDAYEEN ARE LIKELY TO RESORT TO TERRORISM IN AN
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EFFORT TO DISRUPT NEGOTIATIONS IF THEY ARE IGNORED.

BOTH ARABS AND ISRAELIS ARE AT MAXIMUM ALERT. ALREADY EAGERNESS TO FIGHT IS SPREADING AMONG THE TROOPS OF BOTH CAMPS, AND ACCIDENTAL FIRE-FIGHTS WILL BECOME INCREASINGLY DIFFICULT TO CONTROL.

MILITARY ACTION WOULD NOT PROMISE EASY SUCCESS FOR EITHER SIDE. GIVEN THE HIGH STATE OF ALERT, SURPRISE ATTACK IS NOT POSSIBLE. RESUMPTION OF FIGHTING WOULD INVOLVE HIGH CASUALTIES ON BOTH SIDES.

NONETHELESS, ARAB IMPATIENCE, ISRAEL'S INCLINATION TO DELAY, AND THE ARMS RESUPPLY INCREASE THE RISK OF RENEWED HOSTILITIES. INDEED, IF A PEACE CONFERENCE DOES NOT

SOON PROMISE SIGNIFICANT RESULTS AND THE CEASEFIRE
THREATENS TO FREEZE THE SITUATION ON THE GROUND IN PRESENT
POSITIONS, ANOTHER ROUND OF WAR WOULD BE ALMOST INEVI-
TABLE. KISSINGER

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